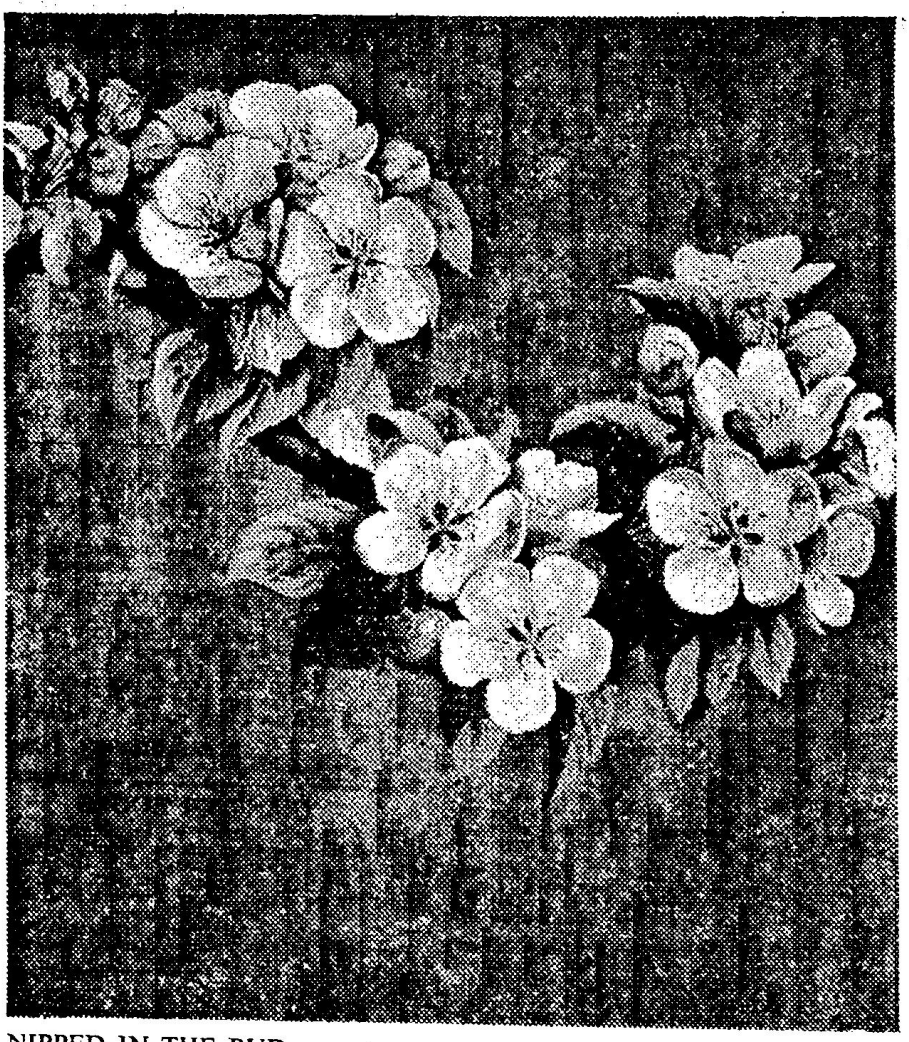

NIPPED IN THE BUD

THE British countryside can show few sights more charming than an orchard in blossom. Yet its promise may never be fulfilled. The brief but glorious period between bud-break and petal-fall is critical. Bugs as well as buds awake to life in spring, and the eggs of insects hatch out as well as those of birds. Against their menace the fruit-grower must be prepared. He turns to the labours of the research chemist made available in the products of the British chemical industry. In fruit-growing, unlike warfare, defence is the best method of attack. The professional opens the battle in autumn by girdling the trunks with sticky compounds to prevent wingless moths from crawling up to lay their eggs in twig and branch. In winter, when the trees are dormant, he applies a " winter wash " to destroy insect eggs and pests hibernating in the bark. Lime wash and cresylic or caustic soda solutions were used for this purpose until, in 1921, the British chemist provided a far superior article — tar oil distillate, which is now indispensable in orchard routine. Pests which escape are met in spring by a barrage of chemical sprays. The usual method is to apply lime, sulphur or Bordeaux mixture (copper sulphate and lime) to prevent " scab," a fungus disease of apples and pears which blasts the foliage, blemishes the fruit and blisters the bark. Lead arsenate may be added as a stomach poison for beetles and caterpillars, nicotine to kill sucking insects like greenfly, and chemical wetting agents to make the spray spread evenly. The campaign closes in summer when pests meet a dusty end from derris or nicotine powders — notably the young larvæ of the Codlin moth which so neatly tunnel apples to the core. Spring, summer, autumn and winter, the fruit grower relies on the chemical industry to help him produce fruit without blemish and in full measure.

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